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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. By its resolution 50/149 of 21 December 1995, the General Assembly, inter alia:

(a) Noted with concern the effects of political instability, internal strife, human rights violations, foreign intervention, poverty and natural disasters, such as drought, in increasing the number of refugees and displaced persons in some countries of Africa;

(b) Commended the Governments concerned for their sacrifices, for providing assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and for their efforts to promote voluntary repatriation and other measures taken to find appropriate and lasting solutions;

(c) Called upon the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to intensify its protection activities by, inter alia, supporting the efforts of African Governments through appropriate training of relevant officers and other capacity-building activities, disseminating information about refugee instruments and principles and providing financial, technical and advisory services to accelerate the enactment or amendment and implementation of legislation relating to refugees;

(d) Appealed to Governments, United Nations and non-governmental organizations and the international community to create conditions that can facilitate the voluntary return and the early rehabilitation and reintegration of refugees;

(e) Called upon the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in conjunction with host Governments, United Nations and non-governmental organizations and the international community, to undertake an early assessment of the negative impacts of large refugee concentrations on the host communities, with a view to initiating timely and concrete measures to prevent damage and to assist in its repair, especially damage caused by mass refugee influxes to the environment and ecosystem in host countries;

(f) Called upon Governments, United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations and the international community as a whole to strengthen the emergency response capacity of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the basis of the experience of the emergency in Rwanda, and to continue providing needed resources and operational support to Rwandan refugees and the host countries until a permanent solution can be implemented;

(g) Called upon the international donor community to provide material and financial assistance for the implementation of programmes intended for the rehabilitation of the environment and infrastructure in areas affected by refugees in countries of asylum;

(h) Called upon Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to continue to provide the necessary support and financial

assistance to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to enhance her capacities and abilities to implement emergency operations, care and maintenance activities and repatriation and reintegration programmes for the benefit of refugees, returnees and, as appropriate, internally displaced persons;

(i) Called upon the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, United Nations humanitarian organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, regional and international financial institutions, the International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organizations to increase the capacity for coordination and delivery of humanitarian emergency assistance and disaster relief in general, with States and others concerned in respect of asylum, relief, repatriation, rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees, returnees and displaced persons, including those refugees in urban areas;

(j) Requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to review her general programmes in Africa to take account of the increasing requirements in that region and with a view to continuing her efforts and expanding her activities in close collaboration with the Organization of African Unity, regional organizations and governmental and non-governmental organizations in Africa, in order to consolidate aid and increase essential services to refugees, returnees and displaced persons;

(k) Requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive and consolidated report on the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, under the item entitled "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions", and an oral report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1996.

II. ACTION TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 50/149

A. Overview

2. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 50/149 on 21 December 1995, the African continent has continued to be plagued by the consequences for forced population displacement. During the reporting period, Africa has continued to host a larger number of persons of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) than any other region. As of early 1996, there were 9,145,400 refugees, internally displaced persons and other people of concern to UNHCR in Africa - about one third of the total worldwide population of concern to UNHCR. UNHCR expenditure and allocations for assistance in Africa in 1995 totalled $482.6 million, of which $173 million was made available for general programme funds and $309.5 million for special programme funds. The revised 1996 general programmes target approved by the Executive Committee at its forty-sixth session is

$155.9 million. The amount required for special programmes in 1996 is estimated at mid-year at $396.6 million.

3. The situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa has continued to be influenced by the harsh socio-economic realities of the continent and the related problems of the evolution of viable political institutions and processes based on democratic principles that will accommodate the diversity of cultures and the aspiration for peace, security and sustainable development.

4. The situation in the Great Lakes region remains a source of considerable concern for the international community, in particular countries of the subregion. The year 1996 began with renewed expectations for significant voluntary repatriation from Zaire and Burundi. However, the number of refugees in the Great Lakes region has significantly diminished only in Burundi, where the sharply deteriorating security situation also spawned a fresh outflow of Burundi asylum-seekers into the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire. Initiatives to encourage repatriation from Zaire at the beginning of the year did not result in major return movements.

5. In West Africa, the hopes raised by the signing of the Abuja Agreement of 19 August 1995 for the imminent return home of Liberian refugees and internally displaced persons have been dashed by the resumption of fighting and the subsequent destruction of most of the humanitarian assistance infrastructures.

6. The holding of free and fair elections in Sierra Leone and the ongoing peace negotiations between the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Government are positive developments that could lead, in the near future, to the return of most Sierra Leonean refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

7. A positive evolution of the political situation in Angola is still awaited, with cautious optimism, to launch the organized return and reintegration of some 311,000 refugees and allow the return of more than 1 million internally displaced persons to their homes.

B. Regional overview

1. West Africa

8. By and large, the prospects for durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons in West African countries are mixed. Although the situations in Togo and Mali have normalized, in Liberia renewed fighting in April 1996 dashed all hope of the repatriation that had been scheduled following the Abuja Agreement of 19 August 1995.

(a) Togolese refugees repatriation/reintegration

9. As the economic and security situation improved in Togo in 1995, repatriation movements continued from Benin and Ghana. It is expected that most refugees will have been repatriated by mid-1997. Returnees are provided with a

three-month food ration by the World Food Programme (WFP) and a cash repatriation grant from UNHCR. With the exception of vulnerable cases, returnees are not receiving individual assistance in Togo. Rather, communal structures including schools and hospitals in returnee-affected areas in Lomé will be renovated by UNHCR, in coordination with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit. Small-scale income-generating activities will also be supported by UNHCR. In addition, agricultural tools and seedlings will be provided to those returnees who are farmers. For those who do not opt for repatriation, care and maintenance programmes will be maintained and an emphasis put on income-generating activities in the countries of asylum.

(b) Liberian refugees and internally displaced persons

10. There are more than 750,000 Liberian refugees in the countries neighbouring Liberia and an estimated 1.1 million internally displaced persons. An inter-agency appeal coordinated by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat was issued for Liberia, covering the period September 1995 through August 1996; $110 million was requested, of which 73 per cent had been donated as of 1 August 1996.

11. Following the upsurge of the fighting in April 1996, all United Nations agencies in Monrovia were looted and then relocated to a safer suburb of the city. As a result of the renewed conflict, UNHCR has suspended its much advanced preparatory activities for the repatriation of some 750,000 Liberian refugees until there is a resumption of the peace process and the restoration of security in Monrovia and elsewhere in the country. Progress in the disarmament and demobilization exercise as well as the extension of central government administration throughout the country are further prerequisites for the commencement of any organized repatriation. A new timetable of the Liberian peace process, leading to elections on 31 May 1997, was determined during the fourth summit meeting of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Committee of Nine on Liberia, held in Abuja on 17 August 1996. A fragile peace prevails in Liberia at the time of reporting. Meanwhile, some limited food assistance is provided through the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator to internally displaced persons and refugees in and around Monrovia. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has continued to provide vaccines and other medical supplies for the implementation of immunization programmes among refugees and the internally displaced. Support for basic education, trauma and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) counselling, medical and legal services and health education is also provided.

12. Meanwhile, assistance continues to be provided in countries of asylum, mainly Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. A recent joint WFP/UNHCR donor meeting in Abidjan recommended a gradual phasing out of general food distribution because a large portion of the Liberian refugees had reached an adequate degree of self-sufficiency. Heads of families participating in the agricultural sector and in income-generating activities will be assisted by UNHCR in 1996. Local authorities are being encouraged to allow the refugees use of land for swamp rice cultivation. UNHCR assistance will focus on the provision of seeds, tools and fertilizer and the preparation of land.

13. Security and protection concerns include recent attacks by Liberian warring factions on refugees in Côte d'Ivoire and in Guinea. The resulting loss of lives and property has strained relations between the local and refugee populations. UNHCR has reinforced its presence at the field level, and Côte d'Ivoire increased its military presence in refugee receiving areas during the month of July 1996.

(c) Sierra Leonean refugees and internally displaced persons

14. During the last five years, Sierra Leone has been faced with civil war following persistent armed confrontation between the Government and the RUF. The situation worsened in 1995, with frequent attacks on villages, roads and citizens. The result was a drastic increase in population movement: 1.6 million persons were internally displaced and refugees fled to Guinea (240,000) and to Liberia (120,000).

15. The military Government handed over power to a democratically elected Government on 29 March 1996. Before and following elections, the Government embarked on negotiations with the RUF, culminating in a ceasefire agreement, the outcome of which has led to concrete transition planning proposals.

16. Since the ceasefire, there are indications that a number of internally displaced persons, particularly in the Bonthe, Kono, Makeni and Pujehun districts, have been able to return to their places of origin. Should the improved security situation be maintained and further steps for lasting peace be achieved, UNHCR will initiate repatriation for some 360,000 Sierra Leoneans residing in neighbouring countries.

17. The United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit in Sierra Leone has updated an appeal addressing needs in the food, water, sanitation and demobilization sectors, which was presented to the donor community at a round table held in Geneva in May 1996.

18. Meanwhile, given the volatile situation in Liberia, an influx of Sierra Leonean returnees as well as Liberian refugees into Sierra Leone could occur. Accordingly, UNHCR has developed a contingency plan for both Sierra Leonean returnees as well as Liberian refugees.

(d) Repatriation of Malian refugees

19. The la flamme de la paix ceremony held by the Government of Mali on 27 and 28 March 1996 marked the culmination of the reconciliation process: the five opposing factions declared the dissolution of their movements and the small weapons collected from the ex-combatants were burned.

20. Given earlier positive developments, UNHCR had already initiated a pilot repatriation project in 1995, and is now focusing on its operations in the northern part of Mali through the implementation of a reintegration programme for organized and spontaneous returnees, mainly from Mauritania, Algeria, Burkina Faso and the Niger.

21. UNHCR has taken advantage of the dry season in Mali (March to June 1996) to accelerate the preparatory activities and the rehabilitation of water points in priority returnee areas, as well as to strengthen the overall absorption capacity in Mali. During the rainy season (July to September 1996), further preparation was completed for a larger-scale repatriation expected to begin in October 1996. In terms of objectives, UNHCR expects that most Malian refugees (102,000) in neighbouring countries will be repatriated by the end of 1997.

(e) Repatriation of refugees of the Niger

22. As in Mali, there was an end to violence between the Government of the Niger and the Organization de la Résistance armée. Given that positive development, UNHCR is preparing the repatriation of refugees from the Niger living in Algeria (20,000) and in Burkina Faso (700). Tripartite agreements for voluntary repatriation were signed on 6 March 1996 between the Governments of Algeria, the Niger, Burkina Faso and UNHCR.

23. Before the start of the operation in October 1996, a registration exercise of refugees from the Niger living in countries of asylum will be undertaken in order to establish the number of candidates, their profiles and to finalize preparations in the area of return.

(f) Mauritanian refugees

24. As of early 1996, there were 66,500 Mauritanian refugees settled in the rural areas of the région du fleuve. They have been in Senegal since 1989, and following the recommendations of a joint WFP/UNHCR food assessment mission, general food distribution has been phased out since January 1996, except for vulnerable groups. Most refugees have become self-sufficient in food production.

25. A survey conducted recently among Mauritanian refugees revealed that 78 per cent of the total refugee population may opt for voluntary repatriation in the coming months. UNHCR is therefore actively preparing for their possible return.

2. East and Horn of Africa

26. The Horn and East Africa increasingly offer opportunities for durable solutions, especially through voluntary repatriation, in particular to Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. The realization of that potential, however, will depend on cooperation among the States of the region in resolving new and potential conflicts among and within the countries. UNHCR has tried to actively support capacity-building within the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and hopes that IGAD, under its reinvigorated mandate, will play a decisive role in peace-building as an essential precondition for subregional stability, security and sustainable socio-economic development.

(a) Sudanese refugees and internally displaced persons

27. In southern Sudan, the war continues unabated. There are some 27,000 Sudanese refugees in the Central African Republic; 91,000 in northern Zaire; 221,000 in 35 settlements in Uganda, which hosts the largest number of Sudanese refugees; 50,000 in Kenya; and 61,100 in Ethiopia. Given the Government of Uganda's generous policy of land allocation, UNHCR has focused on the development of local settlements, which would enable refugees to attain self-sufficiency in food production and gradual integration. So far, some 100,000 refugees have been given land, and some 10,000 refugees who were allocated land in 1994 and 1995 now have achieved self-sufficiency in food production.

28. An inter-agency appeal was launched in February 1996 for $108 million to benefit 4.25 million war-affected and displaced persons in the Sudan. Initial donor response has been poor, with only 21 per cent of requirements funded as of 1 August 1996. Included in the appeal were UNHCR assistance programmes providing assistance to Eritrean, Ethiopian and other refugees who wish to repatriate. Under the overall coordination of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, a number of United Nations agencies are involved in Operation Lifeline Sudan, which brings humanitarian assistance to war-affected populations during ongoing conflict. Most of the beneficiaries are internally displaced persons.

29. Although some limited organized return has taken place during the reporting period, mainly from the Central African Republic, there has been an influx of Sudanese refugees from the South, mainly to Uganda, northern Zaire, Kenya, the Central African Republic and Ethiopia.

30. In the past few months, there has been an increase in acts of violence against refugees and humanitarian workers in northern Uganda. During July 1996, 107 refugees were deliberately murdered by guerrilla groups. As a result, government troops were positioned in the refugee camps in order to provide security.

(b) Ethiopian refugees

31. Starting on 15 December 1995, over 27,000 Ethiopian refugees were repatriated by UNHCR from the Sudan, leaving an estimated 52,000 still there. The preparations for the airlift operation to repatriate 3,000 Ethiopian refugees from Kenya, who have registered and received clearance from the Government of Ethiopia, have reached the final stage, and the operation is scheduled to take place before the end of 1996. As of 31 December 1995, 32,000 Ethiopian refugees had been repatriated from Djibouti under the auspices of UNHCR, so that the total refugee population remaining in Djibouti stood at 25,000, of whom 22,000 were Somalis and 3,000 were Ethiopians.

(c) Eritrean refugees

32. As regards Eritrea, UNHCR hopes to build on the success of the pilot repatriation programme, under which 25,000 Eritreans returned home from the Sudan from November 1994 to June 1995, by facilitating the voluntary repatriation of an additional 100,000 refugees. According to the Eritrean

authorities, some 140,000 refugees have returned spontaneously since 1991, mainly from the Sudan. However, the resumption of organized repatriation has been put on hold due to differences of approach between the Governments of Eritrea and the Sudan. Negotiations are ongoing and it is hoped that a positive outcome will be reached. In March 1996, a high-level UNHCR mission to the Sudan focused on reinforcing the long-standing relationship between the Government of the Sudan and UNHCR.

33. In Eritrea, UNHCR is formulating and implementing a series of quick impact projects (QIPs), in cooperation with the Eritrean Commissioner for Refugees. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is also involved in capacity-building, providing support to the Government in its efforts to rehabilitate the areas of return. Those activities will promote sustainable reintegration by addressing the collective needs of the returnee and host communities.

(d) Somali refugees

34. The number of Somali refugees stands at 126,056 in Kenya and 275,189 in Ethiopia. However, since 1992, the cross-border operation has allowed the return of some 45,000 Somalis from Kenya.

35. During the last three years, an estimated 150,000 Somalis voluntarily repatriated from Kenya. Although the security situation in Somalia remains fragile, it has been decided, following two high-level inter-agency and UNHCR missions, to conduct a pilot repatriation of 10,000 Somalis from Ethiopia to north-western Somalia.

36. In the absence of a national Government and institutions that are equipped to handle the needs of the approximately 200,000 internally displaced persons and the reintegration requirements of thousands of returnees, United Nations agencies are called upon to play a significant coordinating role in areas of return and settlement. In areas in which conditions could have prompted flows of refugees into neighbouring countries, measures have been taken to encourage populations to remain in their home areas through the provision of food and non-food assistance.

3. Southern Africa

(a) Mozambican refugees

37. On 24 July 1996, UNHCR participated in a ceremony marking the end of a process that saw the voluntary return of 1.7 million Mozambican refugees and exiles as part of the peace settlement. The lessons learned from that successful voluntary repatriation and reintegration operation will enhance similar programmes in the future. In particular, the implementation of the return of refugees as part of the Angolan peace process will benefit from the Mozambican example.

38. UNHCR assistance inside Mozambique has focused on the reintegration of returnees and other targeted populations in priority areas by improving food

security, road access, water, sanitation and primary health care. Those activities have been implemented through over 1,500 QIPs, which were completed on schedule by the end of June 1996. In addition, the UNHCR reintegration programme has developed linkages with long-term bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental agencies to assist the Government in ensuring sustainability of the reintegration projects.

(b) Repatriation of Angolan refugees and assistance to internally displaced persons

39. Following the signing of the Lusaka Protocol on 20 November 1994 between the Government of Angola and the National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), a UNHCR appeal was launched in June 1995 to fund a repatriation and reintegration operation for some 311,000 Angolan refugees over a period of 30 months from June 1995 to December 1997. An updated appeal covering the requirements for repatriation assistance for Angolan refugees returning from neighbouring countries and elsewhere was issued in March 1996.

40. To facilitate policy and operational coordination, UNHCR and the Governments of Angola and Namibia signed a tripartite agreement on 7 November 1995, establishing, inter alia, a tripartite commission, which first met at Luanda from 21 to 23 November 1995.

41. It was originally expected that approximately 211,000 of the estimated 311,000 Angolan refugees still living in neighbouring countries would have returned by the end of 1996. The delays in implementation of the Lusaka Protocol and the lack of steady progress in implementation of the peace process, necessary for the voluntary repatriation to start, have caused the rate of spontaneous return to be lower than anticipated. Moreover, no organized movement could begin due to the fragile security situation and the presence of landmines. Although some improvement has recently been achieved with the quartering of UNITA soldiers and prospects for a unified army, only about 30,000 Angolan refugees have returned spontaneously to their places of origin.

42. Preparatory activities inside Angola include reintegration activities, such as the repair and upgrading of schools, hospitals/health centres, access roads and bridges to strengthen communal facilities for absorbing Angolan refugees spontaneously returning from Zaire, Zambia, the Congo and elsewhere. Those activities are being implemented in consultation with the national authorities and other agencies and are linked, to the extent possible, to the efforts of long-term development actors.

43. In addition, for operations in Angola the 1996 inter-agency appeal coordinated by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs requested $188 million. As of July 1996, 36 per cent of the needs had been covered. The main objectives of the humanitarian programme are to bring assistance to vulnerable populations, facilitate the return and resettlement of displaced populations, and promote the restoration of self-reliance. Besides potential returnees, there are an estimated 1,000,000 internally displaced persons and 1,800,000 war-affected (but not displaced) persons in Angola.

4. Great Lakes region

44. The Great Lakes region has continued to confound attempts to find a solution to its refugee problem. After two years of emergency relief assistance, the situation in the camps in the Great Lakes region of Africa has stabilized. The size of the refugee population - nearly two million persons - and the situation prevailing in the refugee-affected areas does not allow long-term settlement of the refugees and voluntary repatriation is regarded as the only feasible solution. In the countries of asylum (Burundi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire), UNHCR is providing essential basic relief assistance to the refugees as well as some assistance to the host population.

45. Efforts continue to promote voluntary repatriation of the 1.7 million Rwandan refugees living in neighbouring countries. The tripartite commissions on repatriation involving Rwanda, UNHCR and the United Republic of Tanzania or Burundi have met regularly. Two meetings at the ministerial level, involving Zaire, Rwanda and UNHCR, were held at Geneva in September and December 1995. Discussions at commission meetings have focused on ways of enhancing repatriation through mass information campaigns, separation of intimidators from refugees, and cross-border visits. At the time of reporting, major obstacles to large-scale repatriation of Rwandan refugees remained, including continuing intimidation in camps, insecurity in border regions and the lack of a comprehensive political solution.

46. The Government of Rwanda has taken major steps to re-establish a civil administration and return the country to normalcy. However, the security situation in the country continues to be of concern, especially in the prefectures bordering Zaire. Frequent incursions into Rwanda, mine incidents, sabotage on both sides of the border and occasional exchanges of fire across the border continue. The latest killings of the survivors of the genocide in Rwanda is another security concern that may have a negative effect on repatriation. The problem of arbitrary arrest and detention without trial has also discouraged repatriation. The recent passing of the Genocide Bill by the Rwandan Parliament paves the way for the beginning of judicial trials for crimes of genocide.

47. As part of its efforts to facilitate voluntary repatriation and reintegration, UNHCR is active in Rwanda, where the key component of reintegration activities is the construction of shelter, principally for refugees who fled prior to the events of April 1994. UNHCR is also implementing a number of QIPs in the water, health, education and community services sectors in the areas of return in Rwanda. In addition to the monitoring of returnees and the implementation of a mass information campaign, UNHCR is working closely with the Rwandan judiciary and police to improve standards. In spite of those efforts, however, there have been no large repatriation movements. In July 1996, only about 2,600 persons voluntarily returned to Rwanda.

48. As the lead agency in Rwanda for the repatriation of refugees, UNHCR continues to monitor the returnee population and assist them in reintegrating. The recent experience in reintegrating large numbers of returnees in a relatively short period has demonstrated the improved capacity of UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and implementing partners in receiving, transporting and reintegrating the returnees.

49. More than 15,000 refugees of Banyarwanda origin from the Masisi area (Eastern Zaire) have arrived in Gisenyi (western prefecture of Rwanda) since the beginning of 1996; their nationality remains to be determined. There have been some bilateral high level visits of Zairian officials to Rwanda during which issues of common concern have been addressed. UNHCR is also discussing with both Rwanda and Zaire the possibility of holding a tripartite commission meeting in September 1996; the last such meeting was held in December 1995.

50. In Burundi, where the security situation has been tenuous since 1993, there has been a further deterioration during the last few months, culminating in the military coup of 25 July 1996. Prior to the coup, the Government of Burundi sent back to Rwanda 15,000 refugees from 19 to 22 July. UNHCR questioned the voluntariness of that return and did not participate in the operation. However, UNHCR received the expelled refugees in Rwanda, assisted them in returning to their home communes and continues to facilitate their reintegration. After the coup in Burundi, the number of refugees wishing to repatriate to Rwanda has risen steadily. During the first two weeks of August, more than 23,000 refugees had voluntarily repatriated. The rise in repatriation was due to several factors, including a general feeling of insecurity among the refugee community about their fate in Burundi; the coup d'état and the generally unpredictable situation that will follow; the economic sanctions on Burundi and their possible consequences on the care and maintenance activities in the camps; and UNHCR's steady flow of information related to the monitoring and assistance to returnees to Rwanda and the reasonably stable situation in Rwanda.

51. In the meantime, conflicts in the Cibitoke province and to a lesser extent in Bubanza province have not abated, and an average of some 500 Burundi refugees per day from those provinces continue to cross to the southern Kivu area of Zaire, although both sides of the border have been closed by the Burundi and Zairian authorities.

52. In view of the situation in Burundi and in spite of the closed border, the United Republic of Tanzania continues to receive new arrivals. At the beginning of 1996, the United Republic of Tanzania permitted the entry of some 30,000 Rwandan refugees and Burundi asylum-seekers. As of 31 July 1996, the number of new arrivals had reached a total of 22,838 Rwandan refugees and 25,517 Burundi asylum-seekers. The Tanzanian authorities have identified sites in the Kagera and Kigoma regions where new arrivals are accommodated. The United Republic of Tanzania continues to exercise flexibility on humanitarian grounds and has allowed some refugees who managed to cross the border to remain in the country. UNHCR has been in constant touch with the Tanzanian authorities to address some reported cases of expulsion at the border with Burundi.

53. In February, Zaire launched an operation to progressively close some selected camps in North and South Kivu. A total of only 1,200 refugees from Kibumba and Nyangezi camps opted to repatriate under UNHCR auspices. The Government of Zaire, in cooperation with UNHCR and in the context of the tripartite commission and the Bujumbura Plan of Action are reviewing its approaches to repatriation, including the reorganization and consolidation of some camps in order to reactivate voluntary repatriation.

54. In pursuance of the recommendation contained in the Bujumbura Plan of Action, UNDP and UNHCR organized a consultative meeting of donors and countries hosting refugees, held at Geneva on 24 January 1996, on assistance to areas adversely affected by large numbers of refugees. A $70.5 million short-term assistance package was presented to help repair damage to the environment and infrastructure. The international community's response has so far been limited.

5. North Africa

55. The Security Council adopted resolution 1042 on 31 January 1996, extending the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara mandate until 31 May 1996. As recommended in a UNHCR technical team mission report of February 1995, UNHCR continued updating the 1991 repatriation plan and the draft budget for the repatriation of an estimated 105,000 persons. UNHCR continues its assistance programme of $3.5 million for 80,000 of the most vulnerable refugees among the estimated total of 165,000. Pending confirmation of progress achieved in implementing the United Nations Settlement Plan, UNHCR will continue with the required preparations that can be undertaken at this stage.

C. Inter-agency cooperation

1. Overview

56. UNHCR has a specific mandate to protect and assist refugees, returnees and in certain cases, internally displaced persons. Those populations are nevertheless a growing proportion of the target beneficiaries of UNDP, UNICEF and WFP programmes, under the coordination of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in countries in crisis or emerging from conflict.

57. During the period covered by the present report, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs on behalf of the United Nations system and in pursuit of its humanitarian coordination function under General Assembly resolution 46/182, issued coordinated appeals for emergency assistance to populations affected by political and humanitarian crises in Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Sudan and the Great Lakes region.

58. WFP continues to be an essential part of the response to meeting the food needs of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Africa. The memorandum of understanding between WFP and UNHCR, which is considered to be a successful example of inter-agency coordination, is continually upgraded through periodic review and updating.

59. In March 1996, UNICEF and UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding that delineates areas of collaboration aimed at complementarity in assisting refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and affected host populations. The agreement will enhance the long-standing cooperation between the two agencies, especially in emergency preparedness and in response to the particular needs of children and women. In addition, UNICEF has assisted the Inter-Agency Task Force on Internally Displaced Persons in developing a database to collect accurate information on the number, composition, health, nutrition and

educational statistics of displaced populations. Moreover, it will assist in maintaining information on the Reliefweb about the internally displaced, a new facility that will be instrumental in improving the exchange of information.

60. WFP is in the process of negotiating memoranda of understanding with several non-governmental organizations and United Nations partners, including UNICEF, with a view to clarifying the division of responsibilities among partners.

61. The voluntary repatriation programme in Mozambique is a recent example of cooperation between UNDP and UNHCR in a number of countries in Africa with projects focusing on multisectoral needs to assist in the rehabilitation of returnees and the development of entire communities to which the formerly displaced have returned.

62. Similarly, UNHCR cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and IOM has advanced both quantitatively and qualitatively, with an increase in the volume of joint activities. The ties with the non-governmental organizations community have been greatly strengthened by increased joint operational activities on behalf of refugees, returnees and especially internally displaced persons.

2. Relief assistance

63. Current UNDP programming in Africa for uprooted populations is budgeted at $60 million, while in 1995, WFP delivered 800,000 tons of food to some 5.6 million refugees and 6.6 million internally displaced persons in sub-Saharan Africa. UNHCR and WFP support for care and maintenance continued for refugees and displaced victims of civil conflict in the Rwanda/Burundi regional operation, including the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire; the Liberia regional operation, including Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Guinea; Somalia; southern Sudan; Ethiopia; Kenya; and Uganda. Stabilization of the political situation allowed a shift from relief to first-phase reconstruction and rehabilitation activities in Angola, Ghana, Rwanda, Somalia and Mozambique, and repatriation from Benin, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ghana, Mauritania and the Sudan.

64. United Nations agencies are continually adapting their structures to better respond to the needs for rehabilitation and development in areas where internally displaced persons or refugees return or settle. For example, UNDP has set up new programming guidelines for countries in special development situations, which were approved by its Executive Board in May 1996. The new framework will use special resources and simplified procedures in crisis and post-crisis situations, as well as in pre-crisis situations and sudden natural disasters. Support will also be increased for the role of the resident coordinator in facilitating collaborative inter-agency responses to situations in which large-scale population displacement takes place.

65. The focus of UNICEF is on work with women and children in their country of origin, and its presence often precedes the emergence of crises resulting in forced displacement. Displacement and family break-up make women and children

particularly vulnerable, and while displaced persons living in camps can be reached easily with basic services, those who are dispersed among supporting communities need to be catered for through specific programme support activities.

66. WFP explores the earliest possible opportunities for developmental uses of relief food assistance, even in the context of a continuing emergency. It attempts to rebuild self-sufficiency in addition to sustaining lives.

3. Capacity-building

67. Supporting national structures for the coordination of humanitarian assistance in order for Governments to adequately deal with the consequences of population displacement is among the priorities set by United Nations agencies. UNHCR, through its UNHCR-Non-Governmental Organizations Partnership in Action process, strongly emphasizes capacity-building in humanitarian work and increased involvement of local non-governmental organizations. In Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Sierra Leone and Zaire, UNDP has set up programmes that assist Governments with the management of aid or the execution of programmes aimed at displaced persons. In Mozambique, UNDP and UNHCR are jointly promoting district development mapping of 35 priority districts with high numbers of returned refugees and internally displaced persons.

4. Demobilization

68. Successful reintegration of ex-combatants is a key to peace processes and helps avert future displacement. UNDP is running assistance programmes for ex-combatants or demobilized soldiers in areas of return in Angola, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda and Somalia.

5. Mine clearance programmes

69. Mine clearance programmes also support formerly displaced populations. UNDP is currently supporting demining operations in Angola, Chad and Mozambique.

6. Environment

70. In such countries as Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire, large concentrations of people in camps have caused land degradation, water contamination and deforestation, further undermining the long-term food security of displaced people and host communities alike. Both UNHCR and WFP are putting more emphasis on fuel-conserving measures. Where resources permit, fuel-efficient stoves are distributed or constructed, and milled cereals that require less time and effort in preparation and cooking are provided. In Kenya, the distribution of small milling implements to each refugee household is under consideration. Coal cookers are already in use in the Kakuma camp in Kenya. Food for work is used to support soil conservation measures, such as tree-planting, in Mauritania and Kenya.

71. In response to a recommendation in the Bujumbura Plan of Action, UNHCR and UNDP held a consultative meeting at Geneva on 24 January 1996 of donors and host countries to review assistance to areas adversely affected by large numbers of refugees in the Great Lakes region. A $70.5 million short-term assistance package was presented to help repair damage to the environment and infrastructure of the areas hosting refugees. The response from the international community has so far been limited.

D. Cooperation with subregional organizations

72. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) is a traditional partner, with which the quality of cooperation is being increasingly enhanced. Joint efforts aimed at addressing the consequences of forced population displacement in the Great Lakes region within the framework of the Plan of Action agreed at an OAU/UNHCR-sponsored international conference in Bujumbura in February 1995 further strengthened the relationship between the two organizations. In addition to regular contacts with the OAU Refugee Bureau and the Commission of Twenty on Refugees, areas of cooperation include the implementation of the recommendations of an OAU/UNHCR symposium on refugees held in 1994 and the development of a new bilateral agreement updating the one signed in 1969.

73. At the subregional level, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), ECOWAS and, in the Horn of Africa, IGAD, are becoming important points of reference for humanitarian initiatives in their regions of activity.

74. UNHCR continues to cooperate closely with SADC in areas of mutual concern, such as population movements in the region. To that end, a memorandum of understanding outlining the responsibilities of both organizations as well as areas of cooperation was signed on 25 July 1996. Earlier, UNHCR participated in a SADC conference on social development held in Swaziland from 25 to 28 March 1996; the conference sought to strengthen social development activities, including assistance to refugees, in southern Africa.

75. The 1992 Declaration made by heads of State at the Horn of Africa Humanitarian Summit clearly recognized that the future socio-economic development of the region depends to some degree upon the resolution of humanitarian problems, recognizing that unless Governments address humanitarian problems on an urgent basis they cannot hope to make progress in solving other equally critical problems that require concerted action. The decision at the end of March 1996 by the IGAD summit to revitalize and enlarge Governments' cooperation, including in the humanitarian sphere, provides an opportunity to begin to implement the 1992 Declaration. UNHCR is closely cooperating with IGAD in the search for durable solutions to forced displacement.